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SCIENCE

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EHRlich's CHEMOTHERAPY—A NEW
SCIENCE¹

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HARDLY at any time in the history of modern medicine has there existed a more intense excitement and a more absorbing interest among the medical fraternity than at present. One of the greatest scourges of humanity—perhaps the most insidious and cruel of all, since it so often places its victims beyond the pale of human sympathy, to be loathed rather than pitied—is on the point of being eradicated. So abhorrent is the disease in the public mind that the press of the United States, which chronicled at great length the daily events in the life of Evelyn and Harry Thaw, feels constrained not to offend its readers by mentioning its name “syphilis,” but hypocritically refers to it as a “blood disease.”

The man to whom humanity is indebted for this achievement is Professor Ehrlich, of Frankfort-on-the-Main. This scientist is no stranger to chemists. As far back as thirty years ago Ehrlich employed organic substances, mainly coal tar colors, in his physiological studies. He discovered that methylenblue and its congeners were the only colors which stained the live nerve tissue, and in order to determine whether this remarkable property was due to the peculiar constitution of methylenblue or to the presence of the sulfur in it, he desired to experiment with an analogous substance in which the sulfur, however, was replaced by oxygen. He applied to Dr. Caro, who, alas for our science,

¹ Read before the New England Section of Society of Chemical Industry, Boston, October 7, 1910.

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